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## **QUALITY ASSURANCE GAINING MOMENTUM WITHIN STATE AGENCIES AHCCCS First Agency to Achieve Certification**

In order to increase efficiency and reduce risk of project failure, several state agencies are developing Quality Assurance programs. A Quality Assurance program is a formal and systematic approach to managing projects with interlinking steps. When employed, a QA program increases the likelihood of successful project completion.

“State agencies should embrace a consistent Quality Assurance methodology to increase project success,” said State CIO Chris Cummiskey. “Though there may not be a one-size-fits all solution for Arizona, there are many useful tools available for agencies to consider as they develop a QA program.”

One example of a Quality Assurance methodology is the Capability Maturity Model (CMM). Interested in reducing the rate of project failure and reducing project cost, the Federal Department of Defense funded the development of CMM at Carnegie Mellon University’s Software Engineering Institute. CMM has been used extensively for government projects since the mid-1980s.

The Arizona Health Care Cost Containment System (AHCCCS) achieved Level 2 Certification for the CMM in December 2005. The Level 2 certification indicates that the agency’s business processes are consistent and replicable from project to project.

According to AHCCCS Chief Information Officer Jim Wang, “AHCCCS chose CMM because it outlines a consistent process, while still allowing enough flexibility to meet our needs.” Wang indicated that the need to establish a quality assurance program arose because of the complexity of software, the expanded scope of projects and increased customer support for both the State of Arizona and the State of Hawaii (which AHCCCS also manages).

Implementing CMM at AHCCCS was not an easy task.

“It took a strong commitment from Director Rodgers and every employee in the Information Services Division to achieve this certification,” Wang said. “I’m very proud of the hard work and dedication of the team at AHCCCS.”

According to Wang, the steps for success at AHCCCS included:

- A dedicated staff to implement CMM standards
- Skilled project managers for key projects
- Implementing a change management program
- Formalized status reporting
- Division-wide education for all employees
- Management’s strong support of this effort

Key benefits received because of certification are:

- Consistent status reporting among all programming groups within AHCCCS
- Repeatable policies and procedures for managing software projects
- A formalized documentation process
- Ability to train project managers within the agency

Though AHCCCS is the first agency to achieve certification, it is not alone in its efforts to build a Quality Assurance program. ADOT, ADOA, and several other agencies are in various stages of implementing QA methodologies.